

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7828

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 6389

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR AR US

SUBJECT: CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER VIGNES

REF: BA 6353

1. DURING MY CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER EVENING OF AUGUST 22 FOLLOWING ISSUES WERE RAISED IN ADDITION TO THAT REPORTED REFTEL.

2. VIGNES INDICATED GREAT INTEREST IN DISCUSSING MFM WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER IN WASHINGTON, BUT SAID HE ALSO WISHED AT THAT TIME TO RAISE ONE OR TWO IMPORTANT BILATERAL MATTERS, POSSIBLY INCLUDING MATTER OF US CANCELLATION OF SMALL AID PRORGAM AS CONSEQUENCE OF ARGENTINE FLAG SHIPS IN CUBA TRADE. VIGNES SAID HE PERSONALLY ATTACHED LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THIS BUT THAT IF IT GOT OUT TO PRESS IT COULD CREATE BAD IMPRESSION AND CAUSE PROBLEMS. HE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT SOME OF THE PROBLEMS STEMMING FROM CUBA ISSUE MIGHT NOW RECEIVE MORE IMMEDIATE REVIEW BY USG. HE HOPED SUCH A "REVIEW" MIGHT BE EFFECTED BEFORE MARCH MFM.

3. I ASSURED VIGNES THAT CHANGE OF US PRESIDENTS IN NO WAY SUGGESTED THAT OUR INTEREST IN PURSUING DIALOGUE WITH LATIN AMERICA MIGHT TEMPORARILY DECLINE. ON CONTRARY, WE WISHED TO CONTINUE DIALOGUE AND CARRY IT TO NEW LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT. VIGNES EXPRESSED FULL CONFIDENCE IN CONTINUITY OF US POLICY.

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4. I RAISED MATTER OF REDUCTION OF AMERICAN PERSONNEL, REPORTING THAT WE WOULD LEAVE CONSULATE IN CORDOBA OPEN, IN VIEW OF GUARANTEES OF ADEQUATE POLICE PROTECTION, AND WOULD LEAVE LINCOLN CENTER OPEN ON RESTRICTED BASIS. I EXPLAINED THAT TRADE CENTER WOULD BE PHASED OUT AND CLOSED BY END OF YEAR, AND THAT REGIONAL OFFICES HAD BEEN MOVED OUT QUIETLY TO OTHER COUNTRIES. VIGNES EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THESE MEASURES.

5. I INDICATED MILGROUP HAD REDUCED FROM 29 TO 20 AND WE NOW HAD TO EXAMINE SITUATION CAREFULLY TO SEE IF IT COULD FULFILL ITS COMMITMENTS TO ARGENTINE ARMED FORCES WITH THAT NUMBER OR POSSIBLY EVEN FEWER. VIGNES SUGGESTED THAT IF WE WISHED TO REDUCE FURTHER, WE MIGHT DO SO BY WITHDRAWING ARMY MISSION WHILE LEAVING NAVY AND AIR FORCE. ARGENTINE ARMY HAD LESS TECHNICAL NEED OF US ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE AND COULD GET ALONG WITHOUT MISSION WITH NO PROBLEM. NAVY AND AIR FORCE, HOWEVER, OPERATED AT HIGHER TECHNICAL LEVEL AND THEREFORE HAD MORE VITAL REQUIREMENT OF US ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE.

6. VIGNES AGREED WITH ME THAT WHATEVER WE DID TIME WAS NOT PROPITIOUS TO CARRY OUT FURTHER REDUCTIONS IN MILGROUP. WITH CUBA TRADE PROBLEM STILL LIVE ISSUE, FOR EXAMPLE, REDUCTIONS COULD BE MISINTERPRETED BY MILITARY AND OTHERS AS PART OF US SANCTIONS. VIGNES SAID HE WAS GREAT BELIEVER IN PROCEEDING SLOWLY AND PRUDENTLY IN ALL THINGS. "LET US PUT QUESTION OF MISSIONS ON BACK BURNER," HE SUGGESTED.

7. VIGNES WAS MOST CORDIAL THROUGHOUT CONVERSATION. HE WAS CALLED TWICE DURING THE CONVERSATION TO THE WHITE PHONE TO THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE. HIS DEMEANOR WAS NOT THAT OF MAN WHO IS WORRIED ABOUT HIS JOB. ON CONTRARY, DESPITE OBVIOUS IRRITATION OVER MATTER OF GELBARD INVITATION (SEE REFTEL), HE APPEARED RELAXED AND CONFIDENT.

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